

## LAME DUCK SESSIONS SINCE THE 20TH AMENDMENT (1933)

Prior to ratification of the 20th Amendment, the Constitution had provided that the Congress "shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meetings shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they shall by law appoint a different day." This meant that the second (or third) session of every Congress took place after the November elections, and thus would include many "lame duck" members, who either had been defeated or did not stand for reelection. The 20th Amendment moved the opening of Congress to January 3, sharply reducing the need for lame duck sessions. Occasionally, however, Congress has felt compelled to meet after the election to address unfinished business. These sessions are convened by congressional resolution rather than presidential proclamation.

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Congress</u></b>	<b><u>Dates and Topics</u></b>
1940-1941	76th	November 5, 1940 to January 3, 1941 (Threat of war in Europe)
1942	77th	November 3, 1942 to December 16, 1942 (World War II)
1944	78th	November 14, 1944 to December 19, 1944 (World War II and domestic legislation)
1948	80th	December 31, 1948 (less than two hours) (formalities to conclude the business of the 80th Congress)
1950-1951	81st	November 27, 1950 to January 2, 1951 (Korean War)
1954	83rd	November 8, 1954 to December 2, 1954 <sup>1</sup> (censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy)
1970-1971	91st	November 16, 1970 to January 2, 1971 (domestic legislation and foreign aid)
1974	93rd	November 18, 1974 to December 20, 1974 (to make up for legislative delay caused by

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<sup>1</sup>Senate only

		Watergate investigation and President Nixon's resignation)
1980	96th	November 12, 1980 to December 16, 1980 (budget, appropriations, and domestic legislation)
1982	97th	November 29, 1982 to December 23, 1982 (appropriations and budget issues)
1994	103rd	November 30, 1994 to December 1, 1994 (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)
1998	105th	December 18-19, 1998 <sup>2</sup> (Clinton impeachment)
2000	106th	November 13-14, 2000; Dec. 5-15, 2000 (appropriations and other legislation)

**Total: 13**

**Source:** Richard S. Beth and Richard C. Sachs, "Lame Duck Sessions of Congress, 1933-1989," CRS Report 90 474 GOV; Senate Historical Office.

**Senate Historical Office  
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<sup>2</sup> House only.